

The Builder.

No. 2022

SATURDAY, MAY 17, 1845.



THE drawing-rooms of the Conservative Club, which have been under the hands of Mr. Sang and his assistants for some time past, are now nearly completed, and will enable the public to judge conclusively of the merits of the painter. We are not of those who would join an outcry against the employment of an artist simply because he is a foreigner, or willingly shut our eyes to any superiority he might exhibit: we know too well the advantage which has resulted both to manufactures and art in England from the contrary course. But it does seem to us, that unless there be a decided superiority on the part of the stranger, unless it be seen positively that we could not obtain so good a result by employing native artists, our own countrymen should be first considered.

Mr. Sang has shown considerable ability in the decoration of the building in question: the upper part of the hall has a very harmonious and admirable effect; but few will pretend to say that an English artist could not be found who would have executed the commission as well, if not better, for the same amount of money; 1,500*l.*, we believe, were paid for the hall and staircases alone; the cost of the drawing-rooms we have not heard.

Mr. Sang has a good eye for colour, and while, by the variety and brilliancy of the tints, employed, and the novelty of that style of decoration in England, the spectator is amused and surprised, he produces a whole which is harmonious and pleasing. But examine the design in detail; it is found to consist of the most common and hackneyed forms; and when you are close to the work you see that the execution of it would disgrace a tea-garden. It is, in fact, scene-painting; and there are several men engaged in our theatres at this time who would do it better.

Nevertheless, the effect of the hall at the Conservative Club is glittering and magnificent; the motive of our remarks is, to contradict the impression that English artists are not competent to execute the coloured decorations of important buildings, and to urge on those who have the direction of them that, as opportunities of this kind are rare, their countrymen should in all cases receive consideration. That the impression should exist is not surprising when we remember that in the only two buildings of any consequence in the metropolis where colour has been resorted to, the German artists were called in.*

* That there is a lack of decorative art in England we do not pretend to deny; and if no encouragement be offered to those who do practise this branch it will be long before there are more. On the subject of decorative art a letter appeared in *The Times* two or three days ago, inquiring what our school of design is about. "In England we have had a school of design for nine years; it has cost the country nearly 30,000*l.* What has been the result? When decorators will be wanted for the House of Lords, are there now pupils adequate, or by any promise of being so? or will the architect be obliged (as was done not two years since in another place) to send to Munich for half-a-dozen?"

The writer quotes a report on the schools of design abroad, especially that of Lyons, laid before the House of Commons in 1840, shewing that fine art was there made the basis of decorative art; and that the system had been eminently successful, and hints that we have suffered in England from not pursuing the same plan.

On a review of the method of instruction in Lyons (says the official report, page 31), as far as it is connected with manufacture, it appears to us to exhibit the true principle on which a school of design ought to be constituted. "If a pupil intends to become a designer and fabricator of small bronze work, sculpture, &c., or a carver in wood, or a silver chaser, or a house decorator, unless the human figure

In several respects the Conservative Club may be expected to exercise considerable influence over internal fittings and decorations. The tessellated, or mosaic pavement of the hall and vestibule above, executed by Mr. Blashfield, is an admirable example of that description of flooring. It consists of cubes of different sizes, varying from the eighth of an inch to an inch and a half, placed so as to form certain patterns, and uniting so as to produce one harmonious whole. The effect is exceedingly good.

The extensive use of real woods for the doors and other parts of the structure,—sycamore, bird's-eye maple, &c.; the introduction of electrotype adornments, and the pains taken to obtain furniture in accordance with the building, by the employment of a professed designer, are all worthy of remark and commendation.

In the general arrangement of the structure, the architects, Mr. G. Basevi (the architect of the Fitzwilliam Museum, at Cambridge), and Mr. Sydney Smirke, have displayed great skill and ability; convenience, fitness, and beauty have all been studied, and no young architect can walk through it without gain much useful information. The vestibule, or inner hall, which is the most peculiar feature of the interior, is full of striking effects and beauties, perhaps more so than any other with which we are acquainted in the metropolis. The size is 35 feet square, and the height 60 feet, and it communicates with the staircase (which is also 35 feet square), and has a circular gallery about midway, giving access to the principal rooms on the first floor. Each side of the hall is divided into three arched compartments, and the whole is lighted by a glazed dome 20 feet in diameter. The centre arch on the west side on the ground floor opens to the first flight of the principal stairs, which is 12 feet broad, whilst all the three arches on the gallery floor are open to the staircase; the return flights of the staircase, each 9½ feet broad, entering the gallery at the two side arches.

In addition to the brilliant colourings with which we have said the hall and staircase are adorned, scagliola is profusely applied, and the perspective effects produced by the plan are multiplied by several mirrors.

The dimensions of the morning-room are 92 feet long by 26½ feet wide in one part and 34½ feet in another; those of the coffee-room are 80 feet by 28½ feet; those of the house dining-room 36 feet by 23 feet, and all the rooms are 20 feet high. The morning-room is divided in its length into two compartments, and enriched with fourteen Siena marble scagliola columns and pilasters of the Italian Ionic character. The coffee-room is divided in its length into three compartments by twenty Devonshire marble scagliola columns and pilasters of the Italian Doric order, with gilt capitals. The walls of both rooms are panelled, and the cornices and ceilings enriched. The drawing-room is 92 feet long by 26½ feet wide, and 25 feet high, and is enriched with scagliola

or figures of animals are to be banished from such branches of industry, these must become the objects of his studies: it is utterly preposterous to deny to artists the full means of study, for fear of their becoming artists. In France this is not considered an evil, but a credit. Were the power of drawing the human figure as common as in France, we should no more think of identifying the power with the genius for fine art than the French do. But the want of the opportunity for studying the figure is the very cause of the evil we dread (page 32). The artisan should be shown that the same principles of beauty which guide the professors of fine art, were also required in his own art, and that he has ample scope for the indulgence of his fancy, and that ancient industrial artists were quite as enthusiastic on matters of ornament as those in the higher productions."

We are ourselves disposed to think, with Carmelle, in *Élément de la Peinture*:—"Celui qui ne sait dessiner qu'une fleur, n'est pas capable de dessiner une tête."

columns and pilasters of the Corinthian order. Above the entablature, in the frieze of which are ornaments composed of the rose, thistle, and shamrock, alternately, springs a cove terminating with a broad band of fruit and flowers. The card-room is 40 feet by 19 feet, and 25 feet high, subdivided by Corinthian columns. From the card-room is entered the library, which is 80 feet by 22 feet high. This is divided into three compartments by square panelled scagliola pillars and pilasters of various green and gray marbles. The ceiling is divided into square panels, with enriched mouldings and frets, and the whole is painted oak and gilt. Polished oak bookcases line all the walls up to the height of 13 feet. The appearance of the library is peculiarly good.

The exterior of the building is rich and stately, displays much originality as well as careful study, and is admirably executed. In the whole it may be said, that the Conservative Club House is one of the most successful achievements of modern skill, and entitles its architects to take a very eminent place in their profession.

THE ARCHITECTURAL ROOM AT THE ROYAL ACADEMY.

We mentioned last week that few of the elder members of the profession were among the exhibitors, and we might have added, not one of those who are members of the Academy. On first looking round the room, the impression is far from satisfactory; churches, and Elizabethan mansions very much like other churches and Elizabethan mansions; a few Tudor houses, and some village schools: there is nothing which at once arrests the eye and bespeaks attention. On looking further, however, its character improves, and it is seen, although there are no particularly important or striking designs, that there are many other compositions displaying much good taste and proper feeling, exceedingly well drawn.

Without awarding this praise to all we may mention, we will pass round the room and mention a few of the more prominent exhibitors.

G. H. WATKIN has a design for a light-house and telegraph tower for the new Birkenhead Dock, near Liverpool (1100), which has much originality; it exhibits evidences of its author's recent travels in Egypt.

J. THOMSON, whose paper on Alderton Church as it formerly was, we printed last week, exhibits a view of that structure as rebuilt by him.

WYATT and BRANDON have only one drawing (1104), a perspective view of the north entrance to Kensington Palace Gardens, —the new road now in the course of formation from Kensington High-street to the Baywater Road. This locality affords two other drawings (1150), the Garden Front of the Mansion now erecting there for J. M. Blashfield, Esq., by J. FINCH and J. H. LKINS, and (1235) the Garden Front of Villa, No. 3, by OWEN JONES. The former is after an Italian Palazzo, with an arcade in front of both the two principal floors, and although somewhat heavy in appearance on paper, has a certain air of grandeur. Mr. Owen Jones's design looks better in execution than in the drawing. No. 1273, by the same, an Ornamental Cottage and Dairy, is more successful and merits commendation.

S. S. TRULON in 1126, St. Mary's Lodge, Hastings, displays much taste.

H. E. KENNALL, jun., exhibits a Mansion in Progress near Chalford, Bucks (1127), which would seem to be of more than ordinary importance, and is treated with his accustomed ability. It is a Tudor structure castellated, with a tower over the principal entrance.

THOMAS LITTLE has several drawings, all displaying a cultivated taste. 1134 is a view of Fairlight Church, near Hastings (of which some notice will be found in another part of our present number), not All Saints' Church, St. John's Wood Road, as it appears in the catalogue; 1286 represents the latter, about to be built under Mr. Little's direction, although this is termed in the catalogue "a Church." E. Thompson. These are not the only mistakes